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AIRLINES CAN NOW OPERATE AT 70% OF PRE-COVID CAPACITY

Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Wednesday that the Centre has raised the cap on the number of domestic flights Indian airlines can operate to 70 per cent of their pre-Covid levels. Currently, the limit is 60 per cent

Poll outcome shows development will be the only basis for politics in the 21st century, says PM; agrees women are BJP's silent voters, adding they turned out in large numbers; puts West Bengal govt on notice over political killings

Approval of Covid policy, says Modi

MANISH ANAND @ New Delhi

STATING that Bihar will march on the development path under the leadership of Nitish Kumar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the NDA's electoral victory across the country was an endorsement of the measures taken by the government to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.

While the world paused in the face of the pandemic, India continued to take "historic decisions" to reform agriculture, education, land titles and others, Modi said.

A day after the Bihar verdict, the BJP headquarters turned saffron, with party workers celebrating the victory. BJP chief J P Nadda set the tone of the celebrations, saying the verdict is an endorsement of the Covid-19 management under the PM's leadership.

"The battle that India waged against the Covid-19 pandemic has no parallel, as the principal priority has been to save the lives of the people. It was also ensured that while free ration was made available to the people, the immediate requirement of employment was also addressed," Modi said.

Reflecting on the poll outcome, Modi said the verdict is another indication of the "new mood" in the country, adding, "people reward those who work for development with honesty." He also lavished praise on Nadda for leading the party to victory in the polls.

Referring to the BJP's silent voter base, Modi said women trust the party because they prioritise "safety and respect". "Women are the biggest silent voters. They have shown their might in Bihar, with a large turnout," he added.

Without naming the Congress, Modi came down heavily against dynasties, saying one large national party's leadership has just one family. "The future is full of possibilities, and the women and the youth see hope in the BJP. The poor and the downtrodden see their representations in the BJP," he said.

In a signal to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the prime minister flagged the BJP's allegations of the political killings in the state, saying that "the game of deaths should never be part of democracy". After Bihar, the BJP will go full steam in Bengal for the next year's Assembly polls. P9

PHASE III WAS DECIDER

Phase	NDA	MGB	Others
Phase I	22	47	2
Phase II	51	42	1
Phase III	52	21	5

Prime Minister Narendra Modi flashes the victory sign at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Wednesday. BJP National President JP Nadda is also seen | PRAVEEN NEGI

> Good railways, better airports, bridges, Internet connectivity, some will say, are not important in elections. People are telling political parties that this is not the case - Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

NITISH THANKS MODI FOR BIHAR VICTORY

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Wednesday "saluted" people for giving majority to the NDA in Bihar and thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his support. "I salute people for the majority they have given to the NDA. I thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his support," Kumar tweeted in his first reaction after the ruling coalition won majority in Bihar

TMC UNEASE AS OWAISI TO CONTEST WB POLLS

Kolkata: With Asaduddin Owaisi's All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen announcing its decision to contest the 2021 Assembly polls in West Bengal, the ruling TMC in the state on Wednesday called it a "communal force which acts as the B team of BJP". Buoyed by the Bihar results, Owaisi had on Tuesday said AIMIM will contest in Bengal and UP

Axe Chirag from central NDA: JD(U)

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ Patna

A day after winning a fresh mandate to rule Bihar, NDA leaders on Wednesday started putting their heads together to form the new government led by Nitish Kumar, though his JD(U) will be the junior partner with 43 seats as against the BJP's 74.

While the BJP is understandably keen on government formation, the JD(U) doesn't quite share the enthusiasm, amid indications the new ministry could be sworn in only after Diwali (Nov 14) or even after the Chhath festival (Nov 19-20).

For, the JD(U) first wants the BJP to send a clear no-nonsense message by ejecting the Chirag Paswan-led Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) from the central NDA before government formation, it is reliably learnt. It was the LJP that deliberately damaged the JD(U)'s chances across the state and hurt the BJP to a lesser extent in some seats, indirectly benefiting the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). The LJP had dropped out of the state NDA barely weeks before polling.

For the record though, JD(U)'s senior spokesperson Dr Ajay Alok denied setting terms on purging the central NDA of the LJP. He, however, said the new government is likely to be formed after Diwali.

As for who will lead the new government, there was no ambiguity. Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi said the NDA will stick to its pre-poll announcement of Nitish Kumar staying as chief minister.

The BJP expects a bigger share of power with proportional representation in the new ministry. "A formal discussion over this between JD(U) and BJP leaders has already been held," a BJP leader said.

₹1.46 lakh cr incentive scheme for 10 sectors linked to production

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme worth ₹1.46 lakh crore for 10 sectors to boost domestic manufacturing, create jobs and reduce dependence on imports. The scheme will be offered to white goods manufacturing, pharma, auto, telecom, textile, food products, solar photovoltaic and cell battery among others, with a total outlay of ₹1,45,980 crore spread over five years.

Of the total outlay, the largest pie — ₹57,042 crore — goes to auto and auto components, followed by advance chemistry cell (ACC) battery (₹18,100 crore), drug makers (15,000 crore), telecom products (₹12,195 crore), food products ₹(10,900 crore) and textile manufacturers (10,683 crore).

Announcing the scheme, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said it will help attract more investments into these sectors, promote job creation and will help in building a self-reliant India.

Wednesday's announcement is in continuation of the government's earlier PLI scheme for electronics and for active pharma ingredients with an outlay of ₹50,000 crore spread over five years, which takes the total outlay for such incentives to nearly ₹2 lakh crore over a five-year period.

India Inc has welcomed the move and said its timely, especially when the economy is limping back to normal from the aftershocks of Covid.

"The new PLI policy is transformational and will facilitate India becoming a global manufacturing hub. It identifies the right sectors and products across core industries, labour-intensive manufacturing, export-oriented sectors and advanced technology products," said Uday Kotak, president, Confederation of Indian Industry.

With the economy headed towards a sharp contraction this fiscal, the governmental indicated that the manufacturing and infrastructure sectors will remain the focus area to kickstart economy.

Boost for social infra

The Cabinet also decided to extend the viability gap funding scheme to social infrastructure sectors. The scheme is currently available only for projects concerning economic infrastructure

Centre brings online news portals under I&B ministry

RITWIKA MITRA @ New Delhi

THE Central government has brought online news portals and over-the-top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB).

According to a notification issued by the Cabinet Secretariat late on Tuesday night and signed by President Ram Nath Kovind, films and audio-visual programmes made available by online content providers, as well as news and current affairs on online platforms will come under the MIB's purview. The order also covers news on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

The decision has evoked sharp reactions from the digital media industry. "This move is a step towards censorship of online news platforms. The government is doing this because some online news portals criticise government policies," said Poonam Agarwal, editor, investigations, The Quint. P10

SC raps HC, gives Arnab interim bail

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

OBSERVING that personal liberty is increasingly becoming a casualty in the country, the Supreme Court on Wednesday granted bail to Republic TV Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami in a 2018 case of abetting suicide.

A vacation bench of justices D Y Chandrachud and Indira Banerjee issued the order on Goswami's petition challenging the Bombay High Court's decision on November 9 to deny interim bail. Hours later, he walked out of the Taloja jail in Raigad district. The top court also granted bail to two other co-accused, Feroze Shaikh and Neetish Sarda.

CONTINUED ON: P10

Govt colleges set to open, but short of guest teachers

PEARL MARIA D'SOUZA
@ Bengaluru

WHILE preparations are under way to start the academic year with physical attendance in classes for students and teaching faculty from November 17, government colleges are faced with inadequate manpower, an issue which could have been resolved earlier.

As many as 14,500 guest lecturers have not been paid salaries since March while more than 1,000 permanent teachers in 428 government colleges in the state are yet to be appointed for the academic year.

Most of them are language and commerce lecturers, sources in the teaching fraternity point out.

The ratio of guest faculty to permanent teachers is 2:1, says general secretary of Karnataka Government College Teachers Association (KGCTA) H B Narayana. There are about 7,000 permanent faculty members in the state. A higher concentration of guest teachers is seen in government college in B and C zones (non-urban areas). There is no saying if they will report back to work as they have not been paid salaries for the last eight months.

Some have also taken up other jobs — such as selling vegetables — to make ends meet, says guest lecturer Suma (name changed) at a government college in Bengaluru.

All these years, lecturers like Suma, who has eight years under her belt as a guest lecturer, are awaiting financial as well as job security.

CONTINUED ON: P5

EXPRESS READ

PM to co-chair virtual India-ASEAN summit today

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Thursday co-chair a virtual summit between India and ASEAN that is expected to focus on measures to recover from the Covid-induced economic turmoil. P10

Indian-Americans named to Biden's ARTs

Washington: US President-elect Joe Biden has named over 20 Indian-Americans as members to his agency review teams (ARTs) that will evaluate operations of federal agencies for a smooth transfer of power. P12

Man held for recruiting people for LeT

New Delhi: The NIA has arrested a man, who was part of social media groups run by Pakistan-based handlers of the LeT, to recruit youngsters for carrying out terror activities in India, an official said on Wednesday. P5

Leopard scare forces Anegondi to shut for tourists

SHREEPADA AYACHIT @ Koppal

EVEN as tourist spots around the historical Anegondi village in Gangavati taluk of Koppal district are opening up gradually after months of lockdown, leopard sightings in the region have forced officials to shut these tourist spots from November 10 to November 24.

Anegondi is where the famed Vijayanagara Empire was founded in 1336 AD, and the Anjaneya temple atop Anjandri Hills is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Hanuman. In fact, Anegondi is surrounded by hilly regions, the Tungabhadra river besides many tourist spots like the Pampa Sarovara, Sanapura lake and Durga Devi temple.

A leopard was sighted atop a ridge on Anjandri Hills a few days ago | EXPRESS

As the area, especially the Anjaneya temple atop the hills, has many devotees visiting it from across the country. As it had remained closed during the lockdown, the number of visitors is constantly increasing after opening up, say temple authorities.

CONTINUED ON: P7

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Wondering how sanitiser firm got your number? Covid patients' data at risk

RANJANI MADHAVAN @ Bengaluru

A disturbing trend of salespersons from sanitiser companies calling up Covid-19 patients soon after the test results return positive has raised huge concerns over violation of privacy and leak of medical data from the state's Covid-19 war room itself. A Bengaluru-based programmer, who discovered this, has highlighted to the authorities how private medical data of patients is easily accessible to the public, who can misuse it.

Rekha Rao (name changed on request), a resident of Koramangala, tested positive for Covid-19. But soon after, that she received a call from a company offering Covid-19 sanitisation services at her home. At first, she assumed it was a Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) protocol, but then discovered it was a private company. Rekha asked them how they got her number, to which they had no answer.

Volunteers working with BBMP to extend support to Covid-19 patients in home isolation, too, have received complaints from citizens about sales pitches for sanitisation, in the form of SMS and calls as soon as they test positive.

The answer as to how salespersons got patients's contacts (and data) was revealed on November 10, when a Bengaluru programmer, Shashi Kumar Shah, exposed the vulnerability of the Covid-19 war room website on Twitter.

It all started when Shah got tested by BBMP on October 24, after a Covid-19 positive case was reported in his apartment complex on Bannerghatta Road. He waited for five days but got no results. He used his 13-digit SRF ID on the Covid-19 war room website, only to receive a response saying "Check SRF ID entered. If it's correct then result awaited".

Vulnerability of the data was flagged by a Bengaluru-based techie | EXPRESS

He then replaced the last digit of his ID with the subsequent number and checked the result and found the name, testing centre and Covid-19 status of that person. It turned out that the SRF ID numbers are not randomised but in a series. This was just one problem.

"I decided to check what's happening in the background. I found that the Application Programme Interface (API) was public and it gives out all personal details that were not shown on the website, such as contact number, age, gender," Shah pointed out.

In this case, the API essentially takes the input (SRF ID), processes the information, fetches the result from the database and displays it on the website.

"There is no limit to what you can do with this. You can just write a simple python script and run a loop over SRF IDs, get the response of different IDs and then access the entire database of people, testing positive or negative. When I tried it, it took me less than five minutes," he said.

He tried to inform the BBMP Commissioner about this breach of privacy, through a Twitter post, but as he did not get a response, he went public on social media.

"Any scammer can get data and commit fraud with this information. It is possible that one of the ways in which Covid-19 patients' contacts are getting leaked to sanitisation sales persons is through such a loop hole. This is just one of the many ways to hack the system," he told *The New Indian Express*.

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